

mechanism was last activated, the method comprising:

applying an electrical current to a solenoid having an armature extending therefrom, wherein the armature is movable between a first position and a second position and wherein the electrical current of the solenoid causes the armature to exert an armature force; and

delaying, after applying the electrical current to the solenoid, the movement of the armature from the first position to the second position until such time as the armature force is greater than the maximum force necessary to activate the mechanism.

2. (Amended) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein delaying comprises:

delaying, after applying the electrical current to the solenoid, the movement of the armature from the first position to the second position until such time as the armature force exhibits a preselected armature force that is greater than or equal to the maximum force necessary to activate the mechanism.

4. (Amended) The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising separating the end of the armature apart from the mechanism such that the armature does not contact the mechanism in the first position, prior to applying the electrical current.

8. (Amended) A solenoid assembly, for use in activating a mechanism, wherein a force required to activate said mechanism varies between a minimum force and a maximum force in relation to the time since said mechanism was last activated, said solenoid assembly comprising:

a solenoid having an armature extending therefrom, wherein said armature moves between a first position and a second position, wherein when an electrical current is applied to said solenoid, said solenoid causes said armature to exert an armature force; and

a delay member for delaying the movement of said armature, wherein after the initiation of an electrical current to said solenoid said delay member delays the movement of said armature from

11.11. said first position to said second position until such time as said armature exhibits an armature force greater than said maximum force necessary to activate said mechanism.

9. (Amended) The solenoid assembly of claim 8, wherein said delay member comprises a spring positioned to bias said armature against movement from said first position to said second position.

12. (Amended) The solenoid assembly of claim 9 further comprising a spacer positioned between said solenoid and a mechanism requiring mechanical movement, so that when said armature is in said first position the end of said armature is spaced apart from and does not contact said mechanism.

16. (Amended) A solenoid assembly, for use in activating a mechanism wherein a force required to activate said mechanism varies in relation to the time since said mechanism was last activated, said solenoid assembly comprising:

11.12. a solenoid having an armature extending therethrough, wherein said armature moves between a first position and an second position wherein when an electrical current is applied to said solenoid, said solenoid causes said armature to exert an armature force; and

11.13. a delay member for delaying the movement of said armature, wherein after the initiation of an electrical current to said solenoid said delay member delays the movement of said armature from said first position to said second position until said armature exhibits a preselected armature force, necessary to activate said mechanism.

17. (Amended) The solenoid assembly of claim 16, wherein said armature comprises a shoulder and wherein said delay member comprises a spring positioned to exert force against said shoulder.

19. (Amended) The solenoid assembly of claim 16, wherein said solenoid assembly is adapted for use with a mechanism requiring mechanical movement, said solenoid assembly further comprising a spacer, positioned between said solenoid and said mechanism, so that when said armature is in said first position the end of said armature is spaced apart from and does not contact said mechanism.

23. (Amended) A solenoid assembly for use in activating a mechanism, wherein a force required to activate said mechanism varies between a minimum force and a maximum force in relation to the time since said mechanism was last activated, said solenoid assembly comprising:

a solenoid having an armature extending therefrom, wherein said armature moves between a first position and a second position, wherein when an electrical current is applied to said solenoid said solenoid causes said armature to exert an armature force;

a spring biasing said armature against movement from said first position to said second position, said spring having a spring constant sufficient to delay armature motion until such time as said armature exhibits an armature force greater than said maximum force necessary to activate said mechanism; and

a spacer, positioned between said solenoid and said mechanism, so that when said armature is in said first position the end of said armature is spaced from said mechanism.

REMARKS

Claims 1-23 were pending as of the date of the current office action. The drawings stand objected to under 35 C.F.R. § 1.83(a). Claims 1-23 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as allegedly being indefinite. Claims 8-11, 13-14, 16-18, and 20-21 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,008,876 to Bastle, hereinafter "Bastle." Claims 1, 2, 5, and 6 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Bastle. Claims 3, 4, 12, 19, and 23 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as